

Shrapnel to Love - Short Story

by AwesomeZombieSlayerGRL

Category: Halo

Genre: Adventure, Romance

Language: English

Characters: Carter-A259/Noble One, Catherine-B320/Kat/Noble Two

Status: Completed

Published: 2012-11-18 23:36:25

Updated: 2012-11-18 23:36:25

Packaged: 2016-04-26 22:18:27

Rating: T

Chapters: 1

Words: 5,421

Publisher: www.fanfiction.net

Summary: Here we find NOBLE team on yet another mission to learn more about why the Covenant was invading Reach.

Shrapnel to Love - Short Story

Which do you prefer? The love of battle? Or the love of someone else? Time to choose...

"Commander, we're about to clear the ridge," I said over the COMM link. "Roger that," came Carter's reply. I glanced behind me and saw the rest of NOBLE team situate themselves for another hour flight. I chuckled to myself. We were given orders from ONI to investigate Covenant patrols that had been spotted walking along one of Reach's deserts. "Don't know who'd be crazy enough to do that," was Jun's comment on the matter. The deserts could reach at least 130 degrees Fahrenheit in the morning and drop to about 20 degrees below. "Heh, maybe the satellites came across an initiation run for a part of their religion," supplied Emile. But whatever the reason, we were packed up, given a bird with enough fuel to fly for about three days straight, and a map showing the trail the patrol group took, and left HQ in about twenty minutes after debriefing. We were also given coordinates to a cave system to use if the firefight grew too hot.

It was said that there were military supplies that could last us about a week till rescue. "Not that we would need it," Carter said when it was mentioned. "It's still nice to have a backup plan," replied Kat.

"Hey, Six? You have any idea on how much longer this flight will be?" asked Jun.

"Given the speed we're going at and the stealth procedures that I was shown as to not reveal our location... I'd say about another hour at

best," I replied.

"Great," came Jun's disgruntled reply.

"Hey, it could be worse," I said.

"Don't jinx it," said Emile.

"Roger that," I replied.

Despite being wary about joining a new group, it beat running on my own. Not really having anyone watching my back. It was nice to be in a team that was more than one. I glanced down at my radar. A red dot appeared, but it faded in and out. My eyebrows furrowed together. It didn't return after about a minute. Either way, if it was just a ghost or an enemy contact, it was worth alerting the team. I keyed the COMM. "Commander? May have just picked up something on the radar." "Alright Six," he replied, "Keep your eyes peeled. We're prepped and ready to go."

"Will do, boss," I replied. A few minutes passed and nothing showed up. Then, a _beep beep beep_ alerted me. I glanced at the controls. We were being locked. "Crap!" I yelled, "Prepare for evasive maneuvers!" I hollered to the rest of the team. I steered left and just as I did, a plasma rocket streaked by, missing us by mere inches. I gritted my teeth. "Six, what the hell's going on?" Carter yelled. "Someone's trying to blow us out of the sky! I can't tell where they are!" I replied. Suddenly, a muffled thump rocked the pelican. I was nearly slammed into the side of the window. I glanced out to the right. The engine was blown off and began to catch fire. "We've just been hit! Right engine's blown completely off!" I alerted Carter.

"How long can you keep us in the air?"

"A minute, two at the most, if we're lucky."

"Let's try to push our luck then."

"Roger that, sir," I replied.

I glanced at the altitude. We were steadily losing height. Then, I heard the _ratatatatat_ of gunfire hitting the sides of my ship. "Damn you Covie bastards!" I muttered to myself as I struggled to keep my bird steady. "I finally get a bird of my own and you have to go along and ruin it for me." Suddenly, a loud _ka-thunk!_ drew my gaze to the left side. Left engine had just blown out. "Commander, bird's not going to make it much longer!" I yelled. "Acknowledged! NOBLE brace yourselves for a crash landing!" Four acknowledgements lights flicked green. I flashed mine and started the crash landing procedures. The ground came up. "Brace for impact!" I screamed. The sound of metal on rock filled my ears as the pelican tumbled and rolled, shaking me lose of my seatbelt and tossed me about the cockpit.

After what seemed like an eternity, the pelican, at last, stopped rolling. "Ow," I muttered. Glass and bits of metal were strewn across the cockpit. My head and body throbbed from being tossed around like a ragdoll. I tasted copper in my mouth. A dark bead rolled down from my forehead, past my right eye, and into the corner of my lip. I was

almost tempted to spit out the blood but doing so would cover my visor. I did not want to risk taking it off in a possible hot zone. I slowly got up and started to hear a slight buzzing in my ear.

"-ix, you alright?" It was Jorge. "Ugh, yeah, I think so," I breathed. I let out my breath slowly and examined myself. Aside from a bit of bruising, I was fine. I glanced around the cockpit and found the door release buttons. They flashed once and I started to push on the cracked window to leave. Only, it didn't respond. "Damn," I sighed. "Hey, Jorge?" I asked.

"Yeah?"

"You mind giving me a hand over here? Hinges on the window's jammed."

"Alright."

The next thing I knew, the big Spartan was over by my window, pulling at the hinges. After two tries, Jorge pulled the window free. "Thanks," I said. "No problem, Spartan," Jorge replied and gave me his hand. I took it and he pulled me out of the wreck. I dusted myself off and turned around to look at what was left of my bird. My shoulders slumped slightly. It was all twisted metal.

"And we were in that?" I asked Jorge.

"So it would seem," he replied.

Had we been anyone else, we would have been meat and bones. These suits have saved our lives too many times to count.

"Six, you're bleeding." Jorge's voice shook me from my thoughts. "Huh?" I looked myself over till I found a piece of glass imbedded about two inches into my biolayer that covered my right arm. I grimaced. I tentatively prodded the shard. It hurt a little. I gripped it slightly and took a breath. I pulled it out. Jorge grimaced when I pulled it out and began to examine the bloody end that was just in my skin. I tossed it onto the ground and examined the wound. It was bleeding steadily. A crunch of gravel alerted us and I looked up to see the rest of NOBLE team emerge from the wreck.

"It looks like you jinxed it," Emile said when he saw me, "Too bad we didn't place bets."

"Ooooh too bad. Maybe next time we might have a little bit more of a warning. Or would you like to be the one who flies the next pelican?" I asked him

"Uh, I think I'll pass."

I winced as the gash on my arm stung and reminded me that I needed to attend to it.

"Anyone have biofoam on them?" I asked.

"What'd you do this time, Six?" asked Jun, "Papercut?"

"This look like a papercut?" I asked Jun and showed him my arm.

Jun chuckled and shook his head. "Maybe not the kind that I've seen," he replied.

"Here, I have some," said Kat. She tossed me the bottle.

"Thanks," I said as I caught it.

I carefully inserted the nozzle into my arm. I winced as the biofoam adhered to my skin. It stung like hell. I set the empty bottle aside and looked around for my gun. I found it by the wreck. After I inspected it and grabbed a couple of clips, I walked back over to the group. "How far did we veer off course?" I asked Carter. He consulted the holographic map on his wrist and pressed a button. It popped up.

"We're here." Carter indicated to six blue dots.

"Our original course was here," and he pointed to a purple line that continued southeast.

"And our destination is... here." At that, the map flew up for a couple of seconds and revealed a light blue triangle.

"We didn't veer off too far," Carter replied to my previously asked question. "It'll take the satellites a couple of seconds to reconfigure a new course," he continued. "That's good," I replied and nodded my head. "So, how far till we reach our destination?" asked Kat. Carter consulted the map.

"About twenty five miles," he told us.

"Wonderful," Emile muttered.

"At least Six was able to get us as close as she could," said Jorge, "It could have added five, ten, extra miles had she veered too far off. Doubt you'd want that."

Emile just looked at him. "Alright, you two. Take it easy. We already have enough on our hands as it is," Carter said to them. Carter looked at the map again. "We'll be needing to head that way," and he pointed south. I looked at the map. It obviously stated that our destination was southeast. "If we take the route straight as it is, it'll lead us into open space. Most likely with no cover. If the map is correct, there are ridges on either side. Perfect place for an ambush," he explained. It was already midday and the temperature was rising.

"We'll get there in about another hour," said Carter.

"Gonna be a long ass march," I said.

"Then, we best get marching," said Jun.

We were within a half mile of the caves when we saw the body. It was a Jackal.

"Careful," Kat murmured, "Could be a trap." We fanned out. Two giant boulders, with a couple of supply crates, sat nearby. Jun and Carter took the one on the left, while Jorge, Emile, Kat, and I took the one

on the right, the one closest to the body. "Well?" asked Carter. I kneeled down.

"It looks like he was killed by one of his own," I said, "Plasma scarring all across the chest. It also appears that he was wounded, too. Interesting."

"Maybe it was friendly fire," said Jorge.

"He might have been taken down by marines," supplied Jun.

"With plasma weapons?" I asked.

"Gotta take what you can get," Jun replied.

"But why a lone Jackal?" I muttered to myself. "Maybe he was a high valued target," said Kat. I looked the body over. "I... don't think so. He has the marks of a lower ranked Jackal. Besides, check his wrist shield. The Majors and higher ranked Jackals have different colors, whereas the Minors have light blue ones," I supplied. I looked around until I found the discarded wrist shield. I handed it to Kat who looked it over to find the switch. Jorge began to walk back over to Carter and Jun.

"Here it is," Kat said when she found the button that deployed the shield. Light blue flared out from the wrist band. Just as it deployed, plasma fire rained down on us. We all dove for cover. "Dammit! It was a trap!" said Jun. "Thanks for pointing out the obvious, Jun," I said.

"You really want to start this now?" he asked me. Before I could reply, plasma hit a piece of rock right above my helmet.

"Maybe some other time," I told him.

"Can you see where they're shooting?" asked Jorge. "No," replied Carter, "Can't get a clear shot."

We fired point-blank over the boulders, but they had us boxed in tight and a few troops began to head down the ridge, practically climbing over one another, eager to make the first kill of the day. I fumbled with a pouch on my supply belt that normally held my grenades. I pulled out a small pair of binoculars and looked through them. I could see the enemy. They were dancing around up on top of the ridge to the left and right of us. _If we had some way of obscuring their vision, we might be able to make a run for the caves, _I thought.

"Six, can you see anything?" Carter asked me.

"Yeah," I replied, "Most of them are up on top on the ridges. But they're too far up. I don't think we could hit them if we tried. Some of them have already begun the climb down. We're sitting ducks out here."

"Seriously, Six, I think you severely doubt our skills," Jun chuckled.

"Jun...", I said warningly, "We are outgunned and outnumbered."

"Never stopped us before."

"What we need is a distraction," I said.

"You have a plan?" Carter asked.

"Yeah," I replied. But before I could explain, a tiny _click! _and _beep!_ sounded right in front of my rock. That only meant one thing... "Bomb!" I yelled. Kat and Emile, it seemed, were slow to respond. I shoved them out of harm's way just as the bomb detonated, hurling us forward. Pain lanced up my left leg and it felt like I couldn't move.

I willed myself to get up, but the armor didn't, couldn't, respond. Kat and Emile were in front of me. Static hissed through my helmet's speakers.

"-everyone alright?" asked Carter.

"We're fine," replied Kat.

"Six?"

"...Ugh... Just fine... sir," I breathed. I hurt like hell and Carter could hear it in my voice.

"Can you move, Six?" asked Kat.

I tried again.

"No," I told her.

Carter sighed heavily. "Sir, Jun and I can create a diversion. Keep the enemy on us while the rest of you run to the caves," supplied Jorge.

"No, Jorge. Everyone's making it out today."

"Alright, Emile?" Carter asked. Emile looked up at the Commander. "I need you to pick up Six and as soon as I say, we'll make a run for it."

"We won't make it that far," I muttered.

"Six?" asked Emile as he began to pick me up. It hurt to be moved. "You said you have a plan. What was that exactly?"

I smiled. "Kind of you to remember," I said, "The first six pouches on my grenade belt. Take those out and hand two of them to Kat and toss the rest of them to the Commander." Emile did so, but paused when he saw the labels.

"Tear gas and smoke bombs? Dare I even ask where you got these?" he asked.

"What can I say? I have my sources," I told him.

"Of course you do," Emile laughed slightly and tossed Carter the other grenades. After handing two others to Jun, Carter glanced at

the labels.

"Damn, Six, you're going to have to tell me your supplier," he said. "Hah, after we get out here," I replied. Suddenly, white hot pain shot up through my leg. I bit my lip to keep from screaming. Emile noticed my movement.

"Six, you alright?"

"Just peachy-keen, Emile," I told him through gritted teeth.

He keyed the COMM. "Commander, we need to move Six soon. She's losing a lot of blood." "Well, you're just in time," Carter replied, "On my mark, NOBLE, let loose the gas at four second intervals, so the enemy can't get a good shot at us." He held up three fingers. After one, Emile took off. Grenades were going off left and right. Plasma fire went wild around us, but none hit us. Emile tucked me closer to him so that I would be a smaller target.

We arrived at the caves about thirty seconds after we left the rocks. As soon as we got in, Carter tossed Jun five frag grenades. The Covenant were already heading our way. Jun took four of the grenades and placed two on the top half of the wall. He hurried back over to us and threw the fifth one behind him.

"FIRE IN THE HOLE!" he yelled.

We pressed ourselves on the opposite wall as the grenades exploded, sending bits and pieces of rock flying at us. That part of the cave wall collapsed, blocking them out and us in, unless we were able to find another exit. "Careful," Jorge muttered, "They might want to try poking their noses in to take a look." Sure enough, scuffling and scratching noises sounded nearby. We all froze. Didn't even dare to breathe. After a few tense minutes, an Elite, or whoever was in charge, called off the scouting party.

We were in the clear.

Carter called Jun over and they began to walk down one of the nearby tunnels to look for another way out of here while Jorge set up camp. They returned ten minutes later, saying that there was an exit but the Covenant were all over the place. We had to lay low for awhile.

Emile placed me next to the opposite wall and took a seat next to me. Kat brought out a medkit and a tiny scanner. "Alright, let's take a look," she said and began to wave the scanner over my body. Every so often, it would beep. Kat waved it from head to toe and when she was done, she took a look at the results. Even with her helmet on, I could tell the results weren't very good. "Well, Doc?" I asked.

Kat laughed a little and said, "It looks like there are pieces of shrapnel jammed in every part of your suit. If you do not mind, I'm going to have to take your armor apart to remove the pieces," here, she turned to Carter, "Commander, will we be safe down here for the moment?" "Yeah, we will," Carter replied and took off his helmet. Jun, Jorge, and Kat followed suite. Kat turned to me. "Six, I'm going to have to have you take off your helmet. There's.. ah.. shrapnel inside there as well," she explained.

I looked at her for a moment. "I'm sorry, but I can't. The... ah... shrapnel is impairing my movement," I told her. She gave me a look. I could have sworn I heard her mutter, "Smartass." Kat looked behind me. "Emile, take Six's helmet off for her, will you?" she asked. Emile nodded. He fumbled once with the switch but managed to take off my helmet. Out of the corner of my eye, I saw Carter slightly shake his head.

It was at my over-regulation ponytail. "What?" I asked him, "I never got a chance to get it cut." At this, Jorge quietly laughed.

So, thus began the long process of removing my armor. It felt... strange being out of it. Vulnerable. Though, technically, a spartan is still lethal even without all the extra padding that went along.

I felt tiny. I was, surprisingly, short for the average spartan. Most others were among six foot. Me? Hah! I was only 5'11. That was obviously tall for the average human female, but among the spartans, I was the pipsqueak. When I wasn't in the armor(which added a little over a foot and a half to my height), I was... how should I put this?... teased by the Marines.

It was all in good humor. I was poked about it among the other spartans as well. I had grown used to it and laughed it off, saying that little people will eventually take over the world(they kind of already... i.e. grunts). We would all laugh and get back, eventually, to our duties or training. It was always good to have a little comic relief from time to time.

As Kat scanned and cleaned each piece of my armor, she reassembled it next to her. She had also bandaged my knee, moving around the piece of shrapnel. "Hey," I said. Kat looked up at me. "Thanks for helping me out and patching me up," I told her. "No problem, Six. It's what we do," she replied and went back to work. The only part that remained in armor was my left knee. The knee guard was struck through and through. After a while, Kat set down her tools and moved over to my knee.

She had out her torch and was gently looking my knee over.

"Kat, I'm not going to break if you prodded it a little," I told her.

She looked at me and poked the piece slightly. It grinded against the bone and caused me to gasp in pain. I threw my head back and laughed.

"Hah... ha.. Ok, that one... actually.. hurt," I said.

"You shouldn't have asked for it then," she replied, "Now, I'm going to round off the bottom of this so it'll be easier to pull out and that way it won't tear anything as it's coming out. It may hurt a little."

"A little?" I scoffed.

"Don't ask for it," Emile murmured in my ear. I nearly jumped. My leg jerked. "Six, I can't do this with you jumping all over the place," Kat said, frustratedly. "Sorry," I muttered. Damn it! How could I

have forgotten Emile was right behind me?! Some spartan I am.

—

"Emile, hold her for me, please. I don't want to cut anything I don't have to," Kat said as she positioned my knee in a workable position. Emile nodded behind me when I felt a slight nudge at one of my elbows. I looked down and saw Emile's hand slightly hesitating before holding me back. It was basically a position no spartan wanted to be in. I glanced up quickly and saw that the Commander and Jun had left, with Jorge watching us with an amused look on his face. I gave him a look as Emile got a hold of me. Jorge gave me a quick smile. "Alright, Six. This will hurt," came Kat's voice. "Do it," I told her.

The tool she normally used to cut open control boxes made contact with the metal rod stuck in my leg. It didn't hurt a bit. It hurt a lot. I lurched back against Emile, my right leg straining to stay still, while Kat had my left knee in a tight hold. "Just breathe, Six. Kat knows what she's doing," I vaguely heard Emile say. I bit my lip until I drew blood. My hands clenched. A scream began to build up in my throat. "Just about... Done," Kat said and she laid down her tools of torture. "How do you feel, Six?" she asked me. "That... hurt," I panted. She gave me an apologetic smile. I looked down at my knee. A part of the rod was shorter now. "I'll be able to pull it out now, but I'll give you a little bit of a breather before I start torturing you again," Kat explained. "Oh, har har, very funny, Kat," I replied, not amused.

I felt pressure on my arms release and was suddenly aware of Emile behind me. I pulled forward and he let me go. "You ok?" he asked. "Been better," I replied and examined my knee. It was a bit bloody. Most of the pain came from Kat's tool rubbing against the rod which began to grind against the bone in my knee. I prodded the rod a little and gave a tiny gasp when it moved. _Six, don't be stupid,_ I scolded myself. Kat waited about a good ten minutes before sitting down and situating my knee carefully so that she had a good hold of my leg (to keep me from kicking her) and a good grip on the rod in my knee to pull it out. Emile took hold of me again and I braced myself for the pain.

The process was... slow. I threw my head back and I bumped into Emile's chin. My lip was already a bit bloody from before and I was trying to keep back a scream that was already climbing up my throat.

I whimpered slightly and hated myself for it. Kat pulled as hard as she could, but it still took too long. I gritted my teeth but I couldn't keep the scream back any longer. I screamed out a list of profanities after the first initial scream. It seemed like it released a little bit of pressure. Dimly, I could footsteps racing back in our direction as Jun and Carter returned.

I let out another shriek as Kat gave another pull. It lasted a few more agonizing seconds before a _pop!_ sounded and relief flooded through me. It was finally out. I sagged against my fellow teammate and took a deep breath. I opened my eyes a little and a bead of sweat ran into my mouth. I watched as Kat began to gently bandage up my knee to keep me from bleeding out. "Thanks, Kat," I breathed. She gave me a nod and smile. "You're welcome, Six."

My vision began to fade. "She going to be alright?" I heard Carter ask. "For now," came Kat's reply, "Her body's going into shock and for now her body needs rest."

Their voices faded away as I reached unconsciousness.

I dreamed.

It was the same dream. Familiar. Something I've had before. I was back on Sigma IV, my homeworld. I was six, playing in my backyard. My family owned a country house out by the woods. It was a nice place to live, especially in the spring and fall. Whenever this dream came up, it switch back and forth between those two seasons so much that I forgot what the actual season was when it happened. This time it was spring. I smelled cookies being baked in my house and heard the screen open and slam shut behind me. I turned to see my mother standing there. I get up to hug her.

Just as I near her, her gaze is drawn to something else. Her hands fly up to her mouth in surprise. I follow her gaze and spot a man of about thirty two, standing in our yard. He was in a UNSC uniform with a military bag on his back. He looked just as stunned we were. My eyes tear up. I rush forward, screaming, "Daddy! Daddy!" He falls on his knees, bag discarded, and arms outstretched with a smile on his face. I reach him and he swings me up into the air and, then, into his arms. My little arms wrap around his neck quickly as I hug him tightly. We let go just as my mother reaches us. He hugs and kisses her as well. He swings me up into the air again and just as I look behind us, I spot a woman in a red and yellow sundress with a straw hat. A man stood next to her. He looked uncomfortable in civilian clothes. His back was the typical military ramrod straight. The woman's eyes met mine and I felt my blood chill, all the joy of my father's reunion disappeared. Fear replaced it.

This woman gave me a calculating look and wrote something down on a PDA. Suddenly, my father's face is in my line of sight as he kisses me again on the cheek. When I look back at the end of our yard, where the trees meet the fence, the odd couple are no longer there. The distant whine of engines sounds and I look up to see a shuttle take off. That was the last I saw of them... Or so I thought.

I woke up a few hours later. Apparently, camp and all its necessities had been moved to the other exit. A small fire burned nearby and a thermal blanket was placed over my sleeping form. I glanced up and smelled the dampness in the air. It had been raining; it still was. I saw the silhouette of Jorge by the entrance. Rainwater dripped down from the roof of the entrance and made a soft tapping sound. Emile was sitting opposite him. Carter, Kat, and Jun were nowhere to be seen. _They must've gone out scouting or something_, I thought drowsily.

"I'm surprised you feel that way," I heard Jorge say.

"Dude, just don't go saying around. Especially around her," came Emile's reply.

"Sure thing."

"Jorge..."

"What? I'm not stupid enough to start saying that you might like Six."

Silence passed between them. My guess was that Jorge was getting the death glare from Emile.

"For all we know, she could be awake, listening to this!" Emile grumbled.

"Six was out cold after Kat got that piece of shrapnel out of her leg. She won't be waking up anytime soon."

I chuckled quietly at their exchange, but I wasn't sure if I wanted to get up yet and sit with them.

"It's just weird, though," came Emile, "Like I've had these types of feelings before... all the augmentations and surgeries. After, I felt that sort of love for my teammates because they're my teammates. Not the love for a certain individual. It's just strange feeling it again." I heard Emile sigh.

A quiet silence passed by for a few moments and I could almost hear Jorge smile in a comforting way. "I think she feels the same way," he replied. There was a slight rustle. Emile must have looked up at Jorge, probably in disbelief.

"You're shitting me, big man," he said.

"Why would I?"

"I don't know... Just for the hell of it."

Jorge chuckled a little. "By the way, I think our subject in question is up," Jorge said.

Oh shit! I thought and quickly covered myself in the thermal. I steadied my breathing as best I could and tried, and failed, to calm my panicked heart. I heard Emile curse quietly.

"You said she was asleep," Emile hissed.

"Only to keep you talking," Jorge replied, "Six, why don't you join us?"

"I'm, uh, good here," I replied. I wanted to spare Emile the embarrassment.

"Suit yourself," Jorge replied.

An awkward silence passed between all three of us. After about five or so minutes, Emile broke the silence. "I'll take the next watch. You can hit the hay, if you want," he said.

"Alright then," Jorge replied as he got up. His armor creaked a little from use. His footsteps neared me as he headed over to a spot to sleep. "Night, Six. Emile, wake me up in four."

"Roger that."

Jorge settled into a corner and sat down to sleep. After ten minutes,

I finally gathered up the courage to get up and head over to Emile. The blanket was wrapped around me. Not really for the cold, just to have something around my body. I limped over and sat a few inches away from him.

We were both quiet. It stopped drizzling outside and the cloudcover broke a little to reveal one of Reach's moons. The light shown through the gray clouds, providing a contrast between the two colors. It was still mostly pitch black, though.

"So, you, uh, heard all that?" Emile asked.

"Ah, yeah. I did," I replied, a little shamefaced.

"Is... Jorge right?" he asked after a few awkward seconds.

"About...?"

Emile gave me a look. Realization dawned on me. I looked away as my face began to heat. "I don't know if that could even be possible," I stammered out, "If we were in a firefight and me and one of our teammates were down, our... ah... feelings would get in the way of the team. It would compromise the team."

"So, that's a yes then?"

I bit my lip and winced. It was still in pain from its previous torture.

"Ah, yes," I replied quickly.

Emile sighed. "What a relief. I was getting a little worried there." I looked at him and he just laughed.

"You're strange, you know that?"

"Coming from a girl who used to pull a few pranks on the instructors back when we were still training."

I glared at him. "You helped me, though."

We both ended up laughing a little. After it died down, Emile looked at me. "Anyway, I know this is going to sound selfish when I say it, but... At this precise moment, I could care less if our feelings compromised the team."

His hand tipped my chin forward and kind of forced me to look at him. There was a click of the helmet lock. I couldn't get a look at Emile's face. I was too busy trying to pay attention to his mouth on mine. My last thought was, _God, I hope the Commander doesn't walk in on us or hear what he just said._

This felt right... And good...

End
file.